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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **EPA Releases Preliminary Results for Surface Coal Mining Permit Reviews**

**WASHINGTON** –The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced today that it has identified 79 proposed surface coal-mining projects in Appalachian states for further, detailed reviews of their pending permits. The extended reviews will be carried out under an enhanced coordination process between EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers developed under an interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on surface coal mining facilitated by the Council on Environmental Quality and signed by the EPA, the Corps, and the Department of Interior. The Corps and EPA will work together during this review process to ensure compliance with the Clean Water Act and the protection of this nation's public health and environment.

"The administration pledged earlier this year to improve review of mining projects that risked harming water quality. Release of this preliminary list is the first step in a process to assure that the environmental concerns raised by the 79 permit applications are addressed and that permits issued are protective of water quality and affected ecosystems," said EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson. "We look forward to working closely with the Army Corps of Engineers, with the involvement of the mining companies, to achieve a resolution of EPA's concerns that avoids harmful environmental impacts and meets our energy and economic needs."

In the next 15 days, EPA will be further evaluating the preliminary list of projects slated for further review and transmit a final list to the Corps. After that, issues of concern regarding particular permit applications will be addressed during a 60-day review process triggered when the Corps informs EPA that a particular permit is ready for discussion.

"This administration made a commitment to be more collaborative, transparent, and efficient in how it executes its responsibilities. The enhanced coordination procedures in the MOU provide a path forward and certainty regarding how the projects will move through the process," said Jo-Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works. "I am confident that this collaborative effort will strengthen our environmental reviews while allowing sustainable economic development to proceed."

The enhanced coordination process, announced in June 2009, was created to strengthen the environmental review of pending mining applications and to address the backlog of permit decisions that occurred as a result of various challenges, including litigation. This process is one element of the Obama Administration's commitment to improve the environmental review of permits for surface coal mining projects in Appalachia and look for ways to reduce adverse environmental impacts. The process will also allow for greater public participation and transparency. Since June, 29 projects have been removed from the list for various reasons, including circumstances where permit applicants have requested that their applications be withdrawn.

The 79 pending permit applications on which EPA focused are for proposed surface coal mining operations in 4 Appalachian states. EPA's initial review concluded that all of the projects would likely cause water quality impacts requiring additional review under the Clean Water Act. The initial reviews were conducted in light of available project-specific information, the existing environmental condition of

the watershed in which the project is proposed to be located, and the nature of environmental impacts predicted to result from construction and operation of the proposed mine.

The list of 79 permits is being made available today on EPA's Web site at the address below along with additional information about the nature and outcome of the EPA review process. As noted, the list will be available for public review for the next two weeks and then a final list will be published and provided to the Corps of Engineers to begin the next phase of review.

More information on the list of 79 permits:

<http://www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/guidance/mining-screening.html>

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